

Message Text

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SUBJ: TALK WITH KARAME

1. SUMMARY: PM KARAME PROPOSES NATIONAL RECONCILIATION GOVERNMENT WHICH I ENDORSE. SEES LITTLE POSSIBILITY IN INTERIM SECURITY PLAN AND LITTLE HOPE FOR RECONSTITUTING SECURITY FORCES WITHIN CONTEXT OF CONSORTIUM. SAYS ONLY IMMEDIATE, STRONG AND SHORT-LIVED SYRIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION CAN SAVE THE COUNTRY. END SUMMARY

2. I WENT OVER WITH PM WHAT I HAVE BEEN DOING HERE TRYING TO STRESS IDEA IT IS TIME TO LOOK TO FUTURE. DISCUSSED SECURITY AND CONSORTIUM PROPOSALS. HIS BROTHER-IN- LAW, ALSO BROTHER OF SAEB SALAM, WAS PRESENT AND TOOK PART. KARAME IS RATHER BUDDHA-LIKE CHARACTER WHO FINALLY WARMED UP.

3. AFTER MY PRESENTATION KARAME BEGAN BY REJECTING IDEA OF A TEMPORARY SECURITY FORCE PUT TOGETHER FROM EXISTING ARMED ELEMENTS. THE SAME ARMED ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN KILLING EACH OTHER AND ARE UNDISCIPLINED. INDEED THEY HAVE EVEN BEEN PLAGUING THE PEOPLE THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO PROTECT--BOTH IN THE CHRISTIAN AND THE MOSLEM QUARTERS. THE ONLY SOLUTION WAS ARMED SYRIAN INTERVENTION TO RESTORE ORDER, WHICH WAS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

4. WHEN I RAISED BASIC PROBLEMS WHICH COULD BE CAUSED BY INTERVENTION, HE SAID USG HAD RESPONSIBILITY TO CONVINCE THE ISRAELIS OF SYRIAN GOOD INTENTIONS, GUARANTEES COULD BE

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GIVEN ON THE SIZE, LOCATION AND TYPE OF ARMAMENTS OF THE

SYRIAN FORCES.THE MAIN OBJECTIVE WOULD BE TO DISARM ALL THE ARMED ELEMENTS. ONCE THIS WAS DONE THE MAIN UNITS COULD WITHDRAW, LEAVING A POLICE FORCE FOR SECURITY PURPOSES. THE HEAVY INITIAL ACTION WOULD LAST ONLY THREE DAYS. IF THIS MAJOR SYRIAN FORCE DID NOT WITHDRAW WITHIN THE SPECIFIED PERIOD, THEN LET THE ISRAELIS COME IN, SURELY THIS WAS SUFFICIENT GUARANTEE TO ISRAEL. SYRIA HAD TO TAKE DECISIVE ACTION,HE WENT ON. IT COULD NOT RISK A FAILURE. (KARAME, IT SEEMS, IS WELL BRIEFED ON SYRIAN PLANNING, AND INCIDENTALLY, SAID THINGS QUITE SIMILAR IN THIS RESPECT TO WHAT SARKIS HAD TOLD ME LAST WEEK.)

5. I TOLD HIM HE WAS PROPOSING A MAJOR ACTION WITH UNFORESEEABLE RESULTS AND ONE WHICH MIGHT NOT BE MILITARILY FEASIBLE.

6. AS FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE INCLUDING EVEN SYRIA, KARAME WAS SKEPTICAL. IT WAS TOO CLUMSY AND INVOLVED TOO LENGTHY A PROCESS, HE THOUGHT.

7. REGARDING JUMBLATT, KARAME WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL. HE REPEATED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO CONTAIN HIM WAS THROUGH ARAFAT. JUMBLATT, IN KARAME'S OPINION, WAS 100 PERCENT AT FAULT IN HIS QUARREL WITH THE SYRIANS.UP TO TWO WEEKS AGO THE SYRIANS WANTED AN ARRANGEMENT WITH JUMBLATT AND WERE PREPARED TO HAVE JUMBLATT PLAY A KEY ROLE. UNFORTUNATELY, JUMBLATT DID NOT KNOW WHEN TO STOP. HE NO LONGER WANTED A "NO VICTOR, NO VANQUISHED" SITUATION. HE WANTED MILITARY VICTORY. HE INVITED ASAD TO HAVE LUNCH WITH HIM IN PIERRE GEMAYEL'S STRONGHOLD OF BICKFAYA. HE INSISTED ON CARRYING THE FIGHT TO TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN MOUNTAIN AREAS. ASAD HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO THE CHRISTIANS AS WELL AND WOULD NOT GO ALONG.

8. I ASKED IF HE THOUGHT THE SYRIAN INTENTION WAS TO ELIMINATE JUMBLATT FROM THE POLITICAL SCENE OR TO SEEK HIS COOPERATION. KARAME STATED THAT THE IDEA WAS TO REDUCE JUMBLATT'S STRENGTH TO THE POINT WHERE HE WOULD SEE THAT IT WAS IN HIS INTERESTS TO COOPERATE. ARAFAT COULD BE VERY HELPFUL IN THIS RESPECT.

9. LETTING HIS THOUGHTS DEVELOP, KARAME REMARKED THAT JUMBLATT SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT, HE ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SECULARIZATION AND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION. I REPLIED
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THAT IT LOOKED TO ME AS IF THE CHRISTIANS WOULD HAVE TO GO BEYOND THE JAN. 22 REFORMS AND THAT ON THE OTHER HAND, JUMBLATT WOULD PROBABLY GO BACK PART OF THE WAY TO JAN. 22. PERHAPS, ON SOME REFORMS,AN AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED IN PRINCIPLE ALONG WITH A SPECIFIC TIME TABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

10. KARAME INTERJECTED THAT IT WOULD HELP IF THE CHRISTIANS ABANDON THE IDEA OF HOLDING THE 3 MAIN GOVERNMENT POSITIONS FOR THE

THREE MAIN CONFESSIONS. I SAID THIS IS A LEBANESE DECISION BUT THAT JUMBLATT EXPECTED A MARONITE PRESIDENT THIS TIME.

11. KARAME FINALLY GOT AROUND TO THE POSSIBILITY OF DIALOGUE. PERHAPS THE PRINCIPAL LEADERS COULD GET TOGETHER, I.E., CHAMOUN, GEMAYEL, SAEB SALAM, KAMAL ASSAAD, JUMBLATT AND HIMSELF. INDEED A JUMBLATT-GEMAYEL MEETING WOULD SUFFICE. I OF COURSE ENCOURAGED THIS STRONGLY. (NEEDLESS TO SAY, WE HAVE BEEN PUSHING DIALOGUE FRANTICALLY).

12. THE UPSHOT OF ALL THIS WAS WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED THE KARAME PROGRAM:

(A) A PRAYER TO THE ALMIGHTY THAT SECURITY WILL HOLD TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION AND ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT. THIS PRAYER TO BE AVOIDED CONSIDERABLY IF I TALKED TO ARAFAT ABOUT JUMBLATT.

(B) FOLLOWING THE ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT AN APPEAL BY THIS PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL CONCILIATION, WITH A MEETING EITHER BETWEEN GEMAYEL AND JUMBLATT OR THE WHOLE GROUP MENTIONED ABOVE.

(C) IF ABOVE FAILS, SYRIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION UNDER SPECIFIC GUARANTEES TO ISRAEL REGARDING SIZE OF FORCE, TYPE OF EQUIPMENT, DURATION OF STAY, ETC., WITH THE U.S. ASSISTING IN CONVINCING ISRAEL OF SYRIAN BONA FIDES.

13. KARAME HAS THUS STUCK TO HIS ORIGINAL THESIS: THE SYRIANS MUST SAVE US FROM OUR FOLLY AS WE ARE TOO DIVIDED. I WILL CONTINUE TO TRY TO FENCE THIS IN AND AM SHORTLY STARTING A BATCH OF MEETINGS WITH SECOND ECHELON LEADERS WHO EACH CONTROL A DOZEN OR SO VOTES, URGING WIDE PARLIAMENTARY AND LEADER SUPPORT OF NEW PRESIDENT, ACCEPTANCE OF A PROGRAM DEDICATED TO RESTORATION OF LAW-AND-ORDER, REBUILDING ARMY AND ECONOMY, AND GIVING PROMISE OF SOCIAL/ ECONOMIC REFORM. ALSO SUGGESTING A SORT OF POLITICAL TRUCE OF SOME LENGTHY PERIOD OR ANOTHER WHEN ELITES CAN GET

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TOGETHER SAFE FROM CONSTANT POLITICAL BACKBITING AND GET CHANCE TO LOOK AT COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS AND COME UP WITH IDEAS FOR PRESIDENT AND PARLIAMENT. IT'S RECEIVING SOME RECIPTIVITY. BROWN

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